
NEWS From:

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Honda Joins Rep. Filner in Fighting to Restore Benefits for Filipino Veterans of World War II

Washington, D.C.— Today, U.S. Congressman and Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus Vice Chair, Mike Honda (D-San Jose) and Representatives Bob Filner (D-CA) and Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) joined with Filipino veterans in support of a measure that would restore the benefits promised to Filipino soldiers who fought with American soldiers against the Japanese on the Philippines during World War II. “The Filipino Veterans Equity Act” (HR 491), authored by Reps. Filner and Gilman (R-NY) and co-sponsored by Honda, would reverse fifty-six years of injustice and discrimination perpetrated against Filipino veterans who entered U.S. military service at the outset of the War in the Pacific and risked their lives for the freedoms all Americans now enjoy.

“The Filipino Veterans Equity Act, which would repeal the Rescission Act of 1946, which denied Filipino soldiers equal eligibility to veterans’ benefits and compensation, is long overdue,” said Honda. **“It is fitting to again raise this issue just before Memorial Day, a day to honor the service and sacrifice of all America’s veterans, including her Filipino veterans.”**

On July 26, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt drafted Filipino soldiers into the U.S. military and more than 140,000 soldiers responded, unselfishly risking their own lives and those of their families to support the U.S. war effort against the Japanese in the Pacific. In 1941, U.S. law provided that these Filipino soldiers would qualify for the same veterans benefits that American soldiers receive. In 1946, Congress passed the Rescission Act depriving the Filipino veterans of their rightful status as beneficiaries of benefits as U.S. citizens. This action discriminated against Filipinos as all of the other 116,000 alien soldiers from 66 allied countries who entered U.S. military service in World War II were granted full and equal status and veterans benefits as U.S. soldiers.

The Filipino Veterans Equity Act would amend the 1946 Rescission Act to reflect that the service of Filipino soldiers during World War II should be considered military service for the purposes of qualifying for U.S. veterans’ benefits. This would allow the Filipino veterans, many of whom who are now elderly and in failing health, access to quality medical care at Veterans Administration facilities in the United States. The bill is currently before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs.

“It is important that the people of the United States, and their Representatives in Congress learn about the story of these forgotten heroes who have sacrificed so much for all of us,” continued Honda. **“I look forward to working with fellow Members of Congress and the Filipino community to bring dignity and justice to these brave men.”**